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ABSTRACT

The separate undergraduate library was originated to provide students with the same quality of library services as are available in a good liberal arts college library. This paper deals with how reference librarians have used this opportunity to provide reference services for the undergraduate student. The major emphasis is on case studies of reference services in two of the leading undergraduate libraries in the country (University of Michigan and Cornell University). In 1969 the reference collection at Michigan was comprised of 3,549 volumes and 25,077 vertical file items, Cornell had 3,294 volumes and a smaller number of verticle file materials. Both undergraduate libraries offer reference assistance during 76 hours each week. The number and types of questions asked at the reference desk of each library are presented in tables. Of 961 reference questions asked at Michigan, only in 19 instances did the librarian spend more than five minutes with the student. At Cornell, the librarian helped the student for over five minutes in 8 of 230 reference questions. The basic conclusions drawn from these studies is that the advantages of the undergraduate libraries have not been realized. Reference services are of low caliber. Too often the assistance given students is superficial and too brief. Some basic reasons for this situation are given. (NH)

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THE UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY'S PUBLIC SERVICE RECORD: REFERENCE SERVICES

by

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LI 002 092

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THE UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY'S PUBLIC SERVICE RECORD: REFERENCE SERVICES

One of the original justifications for the separate undergraduate library was to provide the same quality of library services as were available for students in a good liberal arts college library. Keyes Metcalf stated the facts plainly:

> A student at Amherst, Williams, Dartmouth, Bowdoin, Oberlin, or one of the better women's colleges has at his or her disposal a much larger and better collection of books than has the Harvard undergraduate.[1]

Going beyond the mere provision of books, Harvie Branscomb, at the dedication of Harvard's Lamont Library in 1949, called for an undergraduate library staff who would give students "much reference direction" and have a "better knowledge of the curriculum of study than librarians generally possess."[2] Branscomb suggested "that at last we shall have found a way to bridge the oft-discussed gap between class instruction and library service."[3] Over two decades have now passed and a critical look at the reference services of undergraduate libraries is overdue. How have reference librarians used this opportunity afforded by undergraduate libraries?

First, reference collections, hours of service, and reference staffs in undergraduate libraries will be briefly described. Then the prevailing philosophy of reference services will be presented. The major part of the paper will be case

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[1]Keyes D. Metcalf, "The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1937-1947," Harvard Library Bulletin, I (Autumn, 1947), 289.

[2]Harvie Branscomb, "The Future of Libraries in Academic Institutions, Part, III," Harvard Library Bulletin, III (Autumn, 1949), 345.

[3]Ibid.

studies of reference services in two of the leading undergraduate libraries in the country. After presenting the recorded use of reference services at the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library and at the Uris Library, Cornell University, samples of questions asked by undergraduates in these two undergraduate libraries will be compared with questions asked by undergraduates at the reference desk of the university's main library during the same weeks and with questions asked by students in a liberal arts college library during the same autumn semester of 1969.

Almost all undergraduate libraries have a centralized collection of reference volumes. The J. Henry Meyer Library at Stanford is the major exception with reference alcoves dispersed throughout the building. The number of reference volumes varies from 550 to 4,500.[4] The great majority of reference titles in an undergraduate library duplicate those in the main university library's much larger reference collection. Some undergraduate library planners underestimated the reference titles needed. The University of Michigan Undergraduate Library, for example, found it "necessary to augment the reference collection rapidly /during the first year/. The problem of helping a student halfway to an answer and then referring him to the General Library for additional assistance becomes intolerable in practice if not in theory."[5]

The reference volumes are on open shelves freely accessible to students.

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[4]Warren B. Kuhn, "Undergraduate Libraries in a University," Library Trends, XVIII (October, 1969), 199.

[5]Frederick H. Wagman, "The Undergraduate Library of the University of Michigan," College and Research Libraries, XX(May, 1959), 185.

There has been little shelving of heavily used items back of the desk as was typical in reference rooms of university libraries. In addition to the usual encyclopedias, indexes, dictionaries, handbooks, and other reference books, the reference collections include pamphlets and other vertical file material. In 1969, the reference collection in the Michigan Undergraduate Library was comprised of 3,549 volumes and 25,077 items in its vertical file. Uris Library had 3,294 reference volumes (1,688 titles) and a smaller amount of vertical file material. During 1968/69, Michigan added 206 reference volumes (150 titles) at a cost of $2,311.55. Some 6,857 items costing $473.94 were added to the vertical file. Cornell added 138 volumes (71 titles) to the Uris Library reference collection in 1968/69, spending $2,862.85.

Both Michigan and Cornell undergraduate libraries offer reference assistance during 76 hours each week (Michigan: 62.8% of the 121 hours open; Cornell: 71% of the 107 hours open). Professional staff members are on duty except for four to six hours weekly when Work-Study Scholars at Michigan (students currently enrolled in the library school who also work in the library) and a senior library assistant at Cornell man the reference desks. Michigan has two reference librarians on duty during 36 of the hours (47.8%); Cornell has one reference librarian at all times. In both libraries, all professionals take turns at the reference desk in addition to having other major responsibilities.

A composite profile of reference librarians in undergraduate libraries would portray a young woman who is in the second or third year of her first professional position. She has done no extensive graduate work in a subject area and usually has an undergraduate humanities major from another institution. One

or two staff members have more experience and act as resource persons for the younger staff. In selecting staff for undergraduate libraries, an effort is made to choose librarians "endowed with a great sense of service ... each of whom is deeply interested in helping students."[6]

The philosophy of reference services for undergraduate students can usually be distilled into one word: teacher. Roberta Keniston, the first Librarian of the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library stated that:

> The reference librarian working with undergraduates serves as adjunct teacher for all departments, acting as interpreter and intermediary between professor and student. He has a unique opportunity to help students expand their intellectual horizons, see relationships between various areas of their studies, appreciate books as a means of intellectual stimulus and growth, clarify their assignments, learn expert use of a library's resources, and become aware of the utility of individual reference works.[7]

Reference librarians in undergraduate libraries have rarely considered themselves to be suppliers of specific information in the manner of special librarians. Undergraduate librarians have conceived of their function as a guide and instructor for students who would learn the ways of libraries and bibliography for future, unassisted use.

Decline in Use of Reference Services

The University of Michigan Undergraduate Library, opened in January, 1958, and the Uris Library, renovated and reopened in September, 1962, have now

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[6] "A New Intellectual Center," Michigan Alumnus, LXIV (December 14, 1957), 151-2.

[7] Michigan. University. Library. Undergraduate Library. "Reference Services to Undergraduates /with/ Appendix 1, The Recording of Reference Statistics." /Ann Arbor, n.d./. (Mimeographed.) Originally appeared as a supplement to the 1957/58 Annual Report of the Undergraduate Library.

sustained reference services over a long enough period to be excellent case studies. The recorded use[8] of these two reference services reveals a trend which should be thoroughly investigated.

As is usual at the opening of a new library, the number of brief questions requesting directions and other information is far larger than the quantity of more substantive reference questions. Michigan was no exception. 69% (32,537) of the total questions (46,825) asked in 1958/59 were spot questions;[9] 31% (14,288) were recorded as reference questions.[10] During the next five years, spot questions decreased until an all-time low of 11,610 was reached in 1963/64. In the same period, reference questions increased in number each year until an all-time high of 31,844 was attained in 1963/64. A phenomenal 73% of the total were reference questions while only 27% were spot questions. 1963/64 was a vintage year for the Michigan Undergraduate Library's reference services.

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[8] Statistics in the following section are from:

Michigan. University. Library. Undergraduate Library. Annual Reports. 1958/59-1968/69.

Michigan. University. Library. Undergraduate Library. Annual Reports, Reference Collection and Service. 1958/59-1968/69.

Cornell University. Library. Uris Library. Annual Reports. 1962/63-1968/69.

[9] Spot questions are defined at Michigan as questions asking for information or directions which are "usually very simple, often answerable in a few words plus some directional motions."

[10] Michigan defines reference questions as more substantial questions for which the librarian "explains in some detail the mechanics" of a reference volume, the catalog, the holdings records of periodicals, or other resources, perhaps going to the shelves or catalog to assist the student.

The true vintage has become clearer. A reversal of the previous trend began and has continued. Reference questions decreased in each of the last five years; spot questions increased in four of five years. During the period there was an overall decrease in the total number of questions asked.

By 1968/69 reference questions had returned to slightly under the level set in 1958/59 (Table 1). But more startling is the 55% decrease from the high of 31,844 in 1963/64 to only 14,110 in 1968/69. Reference questions were 61.4% of the total questions asked in 1968/69; spot questions were 38.6%.

Table 1. - Comparison of Questions at Reference Desks of the Undergraduate Library and Undergraduate Enrollment, University of Michigan[a]

	1958/59	1968/69	Percentages of Increase or Decrease
I. Questions at Reference Desks:			
Spot questions	32,537	22,410	-31.1
Reference questions	14,288	14,110	- 1.2
Total questions	46,825	36,520	-22
II. Student Enrollment:			
Undergraduate Students in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts	7,357[b]	12,500[c]	+70

[a]Michigan. University. Library. Undergraduate Library. Annual Report, Reference Collection and Service. 1968/69, p. 8.

[b]Average representative gross enrollment for Fall and Spring Terms. Data furnished by University of Michigan Statistical Services Office.

[c]Estimated enrollment.

While the reference services have suffered drops of 31.1% in spot questions, 1.2% in reference questions, and 22% in the total number of questions, the under-

graduates enrolled in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (the primary group of students served by the Undergraduate Library) have increased by 70% (Table 1). During the same eleven years, home loans from the Undergraduate Library have jumped by 117% and total book use has increased by 91%.

On a per capita basis, each L.S. &A. undergraduate asked about two reference questions in 1958/59 and only one reference question each in 1968/69.

Uris Library also had the expected large number of information questions[11] during the first year of operation: 57.4% (3,792) of the total questions (6,609) asked in 1962/63. 42.4% (2,800) were recorded as reference questions. Only 0.2% (17) were the longer search questions. In five of the next six years, information questions decreased with the all-time low of 2,130 occurring in 1968/69. Reference questions grew for two years reaching a high of 3,951 in 1964/65. This was 61.5% of all questions while 2,423 information questions were 37.7% and 46 search questions were 0.7%. However, during three of the four most recent years, reference questions have declined. By 1968/69 reference questions numbered 3,248; still above the level of 1962/63, but 17.7% below 1964/65. In 1968/69 reference questions accounted for 60.3% of the total questions while information questions were 39.5%.

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[11] Cornell defines and categorizes questions as:

1.) Information and Direction questions concern "library resources and/or their use. [They are] answered from the personal knowledge of the staff member without consulting any other library resource."

2.) Reference questions are "answered through the use of library resources... The source of information used is most frequently one which is obvious to the staff member at the time inquiry is made." Less than 15 minutes is required to answer.

3.) Search questions require "more than 15 minutes to answer and, ordinarily, the use of three or more library resources."

With the Uris Library reference services declining by 18% in total questions (but increasing by 16% in the number of reference questions), the undergraduates enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences have increased by 10% in the seven years Uris Library has been open (Table 2). During this same period, home loans from the main collection have more than doubled.

Table 2. - Comparison of Questions at Reference Desk of the Uris Library and Undergraduate Enrollment,

Cornell University[a]

	1962/63	1968/69	Percentage of Increase or Decrease
I. Questions at Reference Desk:			
Information and Directional questions	3,792	2,130	-43
Reference questions	2,800	3,248	+16
Search questions	17	7	-58
Total questions	6,609	5,385	-18
II. Student Enrollment:			
Undergraduate Students in the College of Arts and Sciences	2,904[b]	3,207[c]	+10

[a]Cornell University. Library. Uris Library. Annual Reports. 1962/63, Appendix I; 1968/69, Appendix I.

[b]Fall Semester, 1962.

[c]As of October 4, 1968.

On a per capita basis, each undergraduate in the College of Arts and Sciences asked only about one reference question in both 1962/63 and 1968/69.

Monitoring of Reference Desks in Undergraduate Libraries

This decline in reference services at both Michigan and Cornell undergraduate libraries prompted my investigation. The first step was to ascertain what actually

occurs at their reference desks. The questions asked by undergraduates were monitored for two separate five-day periods during the 1969 fall semester. (Questions asked by graduate students, faculty, and others were not included.) During the hours of 10 A.M.-12 Noon, 1-5 P.M., and 7-9 P.M., Monday through Thursday and 10 A.M.-12 Noon and 1-5 P.M. on Friday, the monitor listened to all questions and recorded each as asked on an individual card. The monitor attempted to be as unobstrusive as possible in order not to create an artificial situation, hinder anyone from approaching the desk or antagonize patrons. It is believed that this was successfully accomplished.

Definition and sub-categories of questions were developed in advance of the field work. They were based on the United States of American Standards Institute's definition of a "reference question" as "any request for information or aid which requires the use of one or more sources to determine the answer, or which utilizes the professional judgment of the librarian."[12] However, elaborations were made and a time element was added.

The definitions of major types of questions are:

1. Information question: requires brief directional answer from reference librarian who uses no library resources;
2. Reference question: requires use of one or more library resources and less than thirty minutes in obtaining answer;
3. Search question: requires use of several library resources and over thirty minutes but less than one hour in obtaining answer;
4. Problem question: requires use of several library resources and more than one hour in obtaining answer.

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[12]United States of America Standards Institute. Sectional Committee Z39 on Standardization in the Field of Library Work and Documentation. U.S.A. Standards for Library Statistics (New York: United States of America Standards Institute, 1969), 17.

To explore more fully the type of substantive question most frequently asked by undergraduate students, reference questions (No. 2 above) are sub-divided into the following categories:

R-1. Bibliographical assistance with the library's own catalogs and holdings;

R-2. Bibliographical assistance with the holdings of other campus libraries;

R-3. Bibliographical verification of material not on campus;

R-4. Retrieval of factual, non-bibliographical information from any source;

R-5. Counseling of students in a reader's advisory capacity (reading guidance);

R-6. Informal personal instruction in use of library or any of its resources;

R-7. Miscellaneous questions not covered by the preceeding six categories.

Tables 3 and 4 show the types of questions asked by undergraduates in the Michigan Undergraduate Library and the Uris Library. The data confirm that only a brief time is spent with each student seeking reference assistance. Two search questions (over 30 minutes) were recorded at Cornell and one problem question (over one hour) occurred at Michigan. Of the 961 reference questions asked at Michigan's Undergraduate Library, only in 19 instances did the librarian spend more than five minutes with the student. At Uris Library the librarian assisted the student for over five minutes in 8 of 230 reference questions. Information questions, which form about one-half of the total questions at Michigan and about 60% at Cornell, are much briefer encounters, often lasting only a few seconds.

Table 3. - Questions Asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desks, Undergraduate Library,

University of Michigan

Types of Questions	October 6-10, 1969		November 10-14, 1969	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Information Reference:	502	53.3	479	47.8
R-1	262	27.9	348	34.7
R-2	39	4.2	47	4.6
R-3	---	----	---	----
R-4	91	9.7	75	7.5
R-5	12	1.3	22	2.2
R-6	34	3.6	31	3.1
R-7	---	----	---	----
Sub-total	438	46.7	523	52.1
Search	---	----	---	----
Problem	---	----	1	0.1
Total	940	100	1003	100

Table 4. - Questions Asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desk, Uris Library, Cornell University

Types of Questions	November 3-7, 1969		December 8-12, 1969	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Information Reference:	67	40.1	64	32.7
R-1	69	41.4	90	45.9
R-2	6	3.6	7	3.5
R-3	1	0.6	--	----
R-4	18	10.8	30	15.4
R-5	1	0.6	1	0.5
R-6	3	1.7	3	1.5
R-7	1	0.6	--	----
Sub-total	99	59.3	131	66.8
Search	1	0.6	1	0.5
Problem	--	----	--	----
Total	167	100	196	100

Bibliographical assistance with the library's own catalog and holdings (R-1) constitutes the bulk of reference questions. There is very little assistance with holdings of other campus libraries (R-2). In only one instance in 1,191 reference questions was there assistance with non-campus holdings (R-3). Although philosophies of reference service for undergraduates portray the librarian as teacher, little personal instruction is given in the use of the library or any of its resources (R-6). Retrieval of factual, non-bibliographical information (R-4) takes place more often than instruction. Librarians rarely counsel students in a reader's advisory capacity (R-5).

In an attempt to evaluate the calibre of questions and service given, the information questions and R-1 questions were further analyzed. At Michigan 9% of the information questions could be categorized as assistance with physical facilities (location of pencil sharpener, request to borrow pencil, requests for keys or the unlocking of rooms, and similar requests). At Cornell these requests were 45% of the information questions. Other categories of these brief questions (and their percentages of the total information questions) were:

	Michigan Undergraduate Library	Uris Library, Cornell
Requests for location of a particular volume (student had call number and librarian gave directions)	33%	12%
Requests for information or publication (student did not have call number; librarian knew answer without referring to any source or directed student to catalog or reference collection giving no additional help)	12%	18%
Questions concerning services or collections (librarian responded with brief directions or information)	45%	21%

Analyses of the R-1 questions are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. - Reference Questions (R-1: Bibliographical Assistance with Library's Own Catalogs and Holdings) asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desks, Undergraduate Library,

University of Michigan

Sub-categories of R-1 Questions	October 6-10, 1969		November 10-14, 1969	
	Number	Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked	Number	Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked
Requests for particular volume or type of volume; librarian gave assistance by:				
Checking list of frequently used reference titles and giving student call number	10	2.2	9	1.7
Charging out heavily used item from drawer of desk or from office	27	6.2	47	8.9
Going to reference shelves and producing particular volume for student who had usually given title or described type	30	6.9	48	9.2
Going to main collection and locating volume which student had been unable to find	20	4.5	11	2.1
Sub-total	87	19.8	115	21.9

Table 5. - Continued.

Sub-categories of R-1 Questions	October 6-10, 1969 Number	October 6-10, 1969 Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked	November 10-14, 1969 Number	November 10-14, 1969 Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked
Requests for general bibliographical assistance; librarian responded by:				
Using reference collection or pamphlet file	34	7.8	50	9.6
Assisting student at catalog or record of periodical holdings	104	23.8	116	22.2
Using Subject Headings Used in ... the Library of Congress (or library's own subject headings list for pamphlet file)	10	2.2	15	2.8
Assisting in use of microfilm	17	3.9	39	7.5
Assisting in use of print-out of circulation and reserve charges	10	2.2	13	2.5
Sub-total	175	39.9	233	44.6
Total R-1 Questions	262	59.7	348	66.5
Other Reference Questions (R-2 through R-7)	176	40.2	175	33.4
Total Reference Questions	438	99.9	523	99.9

Table 6. - Reference Questions (R-1: Bibliographical Assistance with Library's Own Catalogs and Holdings) asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desk, Uris Library, Cornell University

Sub-categories of R-1 Questions	November 3-7, 1969		December 8-12, 1969	
	Number	Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked	Number	Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked
Requests for particular volume or type of volume; librarian gave assistance by:				
Checking list of frequently used reference titles and giving student call number	--	----	--	----
Charging out heavily used item from drawer of desk or area back of desk	11	11.	4	3.
Going to reference shelves and producing particular volume for student who had usually given title or described type	21	21.	25	19.
Going to main collection and locating volume which student had been unable to find	--	----	9	7.
Sub-total	32	32.	38	29.

Table 6. - Continued.

Sub-categories of R-1 Questions	November 3-7, 1969		December 8-12, 1969	
	Number	Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked	Number	Percentage of Total Reference Questions Asked
Requests for general bibliographical assistance; librarian responded by:				
Using reference collection	16	16.	28	21.
Assisting student at main catalog or serials catalog	19	19.	24	18.
Using Subject Headings Used in ... the Library of Congress	2	2.	--	---
Assisting in use of microforms[a]	--	---	--	---
Assisting in use of circulation records	--	---	--	---
Sub-total	37	37.	52	39.
Total R-1 Questions	69	69.	90	68.
Other Reference Questions (R-2 through R-7)	30	30.	41	31.
Total Reference Questions	99	99.	131	99.

[a]Uris Library has no microforms.

At the Michigan Undergraduate Library, assisting students at the catalog or at the records of periodical holdings constitutes the largest number of reference questions. 55-60% of this assistance is with the records of periodical holdings. Uris reference librarians, who serve considerably fewer students than Michigan, have time to go with students to the reference shelves a greater proportion of the times they are asked reference questions. Assistance at the main or serials catalogs is also a substantial part of Uris reference services.

Use of Reference Services in University Libraries

Undergraduates have available another major reference service at both universities. Have they ceased using the reference services of the undergraduate libraries and begun to ask their questions at the reference departments of the main university library? To answer this question, another monitor listened to all questions asked at the reference desk of the University of Michigan General Library and of the John M. Olin Library, Cornell University, during the same hours in which their undergraduate libraries were studied. Tables 7 and 8 report the questions asked by undergraduates.

At Michigan during October 6-10, 1969, the Undergraduate Library reference librarians were serving almost 7 times the number of undergraduates as were served by the reference staff in the General Library. During November 10-14, the Undergraduate Library reference librarians served over 5 times as many undergraduates. During the October monitoring, undergraduates asked 21% of the total questions (617) asked at the General Library's reference desk. During the week in November, the undergraduate questions rose to 28% of the total questions (665).

Table 7. - Questions Asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desk, General Library, University of Michigan

Types of Questions	October 6-10, 1969		November 10-14, 1969	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Information	65	48.1	84	44.4
Reference:				
R-1	43	31.9	60	31.8
R-2	--	----	--	----
R-3	3	2.2	5	2.6
R-4	18	13.3	35	18.5
R-5	1	0.7	--	----
R-6	4	3.0	5	2.6
R-7	--	----	--	----
Sub-total	69	51.1	105	55.5
Search	1	0.7	--	----
Problem	--	----	--	----
Total	135	99.9	189	99.9

Table 8. - Questions Asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desks, John M. Olin Library,

Cornell University

Types of Questions	November 3-7, 1969		December 8-12, 1969	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Information	42	32.3	56	29.7
Reference:				
R-1	60	46.2	90	47.8
R-2	2	1.5	1	0.5
R-3	1	0.7	5	2.7
R-4	21	16.2	34	18.1
R-5	--	--	--	----
R-6	4	3.0	2	1.1
R-7	--	----	--	----
Sub-total	88	67.6	132	70.2
Search	--	----	--	----
Problem	--	----	--	----
Total	130	99.9	188	99.9

Cornell presents a contrasting situation. The reference librarians in Olin Library answered 130 questions from undergraduates during November 3-7 while the Uris staff members were answering only 167 questions during the same hours. In the December week Olin librarians almost pulled even with the Uris staff (188 questions by undergraduates in Olin; 196 questions in Uris). During the November monitoring, undergraduates asked 23% of the total questions (554) asked at the Olin reference desks. In December the undergraduate questions rose to 34% of the total (548).

Undergraduate Users of Union Catalog

An additional investigation was conducted in both the Michigan General Library and Cornell's Olin Library to test the hypothesis that unassisted use by undergraduates of the union catalog of campus holdings increases use of the main university library and decreases use of the undergraduate library on the same campus. All undergraduates using the union catalog during certain hours of one week were interviewed. Table 9 presents the basic data.

Table 9. - Union Catalog Users in General Library, University of Michigan, and John M. Olin Library, Cornell University

	Michigan[a]		Cornell[b]	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Undergraduates Interviewed	474		427	
Undergraduates Refusing Interview	5		---	
Undergraduates Who Had Been Previously Interviewed	33		78	
Total Undergraduate Users	512	28.3	505	32.7
Graduate Students, Faculty, and University Staff (excludes Library Staff)	1,281	70.9	958	62.
Non-University Users (Local Residents; Students and Faculty from Other Institutions)	15	0.8	82	5.3
Total Users of Union Catalog	1,808	100	1,545	100

[a]Interviews conducted during week of September 29-October 3, 1969. Hours on Monday-Thursday were: 10 A.M. - 12 Noon, 1 - 5 P.M., and 7 - 9 P.M. On Friday: 10 A.M. - 12 Noon and 1 - 5 P.M.

[b]Interviews conducted October 27-31, 1969 during the same hours noted above.

In percentages, the undergraduates interviewed were members of the following university classes:

	Michigan (N=474)	Cornell (N=427)
Freshman	16.8%	12.8%
Sophomore	21.7	19.2
Junior	29.7	29.9
Senior	31.6	37.7
Special Unclassified	----	0.2

At Michigan, the undergraduates were from the following schools and colleges:

College of Literature, Science, and the Arts	83.5%
College of Engineering	6.3
School of Education	4.2
College of Architecture and Design	2.1
School of Nursing	1.9
School of Natural Resources	1.1
School of Business Administration	0.4
College of Pharmacy	0.4

Cornell undergraduates were from seven schools and colleges:

College of Arts and Sciences	64.9%
New York State College of Agriculture	11.5
New York State College of Human Ecology	7.2
College of Engineering	7.0
New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations	4.7
College of Architecture, Art, and Planning	3.7
School of Hotel Administration	0.9

All undergraduates were asked: "Did you use the Undergraduate Library catalog before coming here?" Their responses were:

	Yes	No
Michigan	40.9%	59%
Cornell	24.3	75.6

Those who replied that they had used the Undergraduate Library catalog before coming to the union catalog were then asked: "Why are you now using this main catalog?" The reasons were:

	Michigan (N=205)	Cornell (N=105)
Undergraduate Library did not have material	46%	40%
Material in use in Undergraduate Library (out, on reserve, etc.)	32	41
Wanted additional material	16	17
Referred to Union Catalog by Undergraduate reference librarian	1.5	--
Did not use Undergraduate catalog properly	1	--
Wanted different edition	0.5	--
Had wrong citation	0.5	--
Subject headings in Undergraduate catalog not specific enough	0.5	--
Could not find the catalog in Undergraduate Library	----	1

Those who said that they had not used the Undergraduate Library catalog before coming to the union catalog in this particular instance were asked: "Do you usually by-pass the Undergraduate Library catalog and come to the main catalog first?" The responses were:

	Michigan (N=280)	Cornell (N=323)
Yes	65.7%	77.4%
No	23.2	12.4
About half the time, I by-pass it	6.0	7.1
Depends on the material I am seeking	3.9	2.1
Depends on which is closer	0.7	----
Depends on where I want to study	----	0.3
First time in any campus library	0.3	0.6

Undergraduates who affirmed that they usually by-passed the Undergraduate Library catalog were next asked: "Why do you not use the Undergraduate Library catalog first?" Responses were varied:

	Michigan (N=208)	Cornell (N=311)
This is a union catalog listing holdings of all campus libraries	21.6%	32.7%
Most of the university's books are here in the main library	15.8	17.3
I have an Olin Library stack permit[13]	----	14.7
Have found through experience that the Undergraduate Library lacks what I want	19.2	10.6
I like the main university library better	9.1	4.8
I do not like the Undergraduate Library	12.0	3.5
I work here in the main library	0.9	3.5
I use a college or school library first	----	3.2
It depends on the material I am seeking	0.9	2.2
I do not know why	----	1.9
Undergraduate collection is too small	11.5	1.2
Too much is on reserve in the Undergraduate Library	3.8	0.6
My professor sent me here to use union catalog	1.4	0.3
The main library is closer to my living quarters	1.9	0.3
I did not know the Undergraduate Library existed	1.4	0.3
Miscellaneous (ranging from "Help is easier to get in the Olin Library" to "I am interested in a boy who studies here")	----	2.2

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[13] The stacks of the Olin Library, Cornell, are closed to most undergraduates. The University of Michigan General Library stacks are open to all undergraduates.

The final question posed to all undergraduates using the union catalog was: "If the Undergraduate Library had a catalog like this one which includes holdings of all campus libraries, would you use it there or still come here?"

	Michigan (N=474)	Cornell (N=427)
Still come here	41.7%	47.5%
Use it there /Undergraduate Library/	51.2	35.6
Does not matter to me	1.0	9.1
I do not know	2.7	3.5
Would use whichever is closer	2.5	2.1
Depends on material sought	0.6	1.6
It is unnecessary to duplicate because the Undergraduate Library is so close to main library	----	0.2
Depends on how noisy the Undergraduate Library is	----	0.2

There seems to be no question that undergraduates, particularly upperclassmen, go in substantial numbers to use the union catalog in the main library. They have entirely by-passed the Undergraduate Library's catalog in most cases (59% at Michigan and 75.6% at Cornell). The major reason given by the undergraduates is the excellent one that the holdings of all campus libraries are included in the union catalog. It would not seem worthwhile to duplicate the union catalog, perhaps in book form, in order to lure the undergraduates back to the Undergraduate Library. Only one-half of the Michigan students interviewed said that they would use a union catalog in the Undergraduate Library while fewer (35.6%) of the Cornell undergraduates would use such a catalog in the Uris Library. Many of the students would continue to go to the main library (41.7% at Michigan; 47.5% at Cornell). The large number of volumes housed in the main university library is a magnet apparently too strong to be overcome even by the very expensive duplication of the union catalog.

Reference Service at a College Library

Do students receive superior reference services in libraries of liberal arts colleges? Or is this a myth created by our nostalgia for the small, intimate, less complicated world which we imagine these colleges to be? As a case study of a college library's reference services, the Lilly Library at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana was chosen. You should be immediately warned that this is one of the best college reference services in the country and may not be typical of other college libraries. Supplementing the excellent reference assistance at Earlham is one of the best library instruction programs.[14]

Questions asked by undergraduates at Lilly Library's reference desk were monitored in the same way as previously described. Undergraduate students are the major users. During October 13-17, they accounted for 71% of the total questions (188) with faculty, staff, and others asking 29%. During November 17-21, 83% of the total (195) were undergraduate questions while faculty, staff, and others asked 17%.

Table 10 categorizes the questions asked by undergraduates. Substantive reference questions (84.3% in the first week; 78.5% the second week) overwhelmingly out numbered the information questions. Requests for bibliographical assistance with the library's catalog and holdings (R-1) were again the major type of questions. R-1 questions comprised 46-50% of all questions at Earlham. In many cases the reference librarians used both the catalog and reference collection to assist students. This was in contrast to the Michigan and Cornell librarians who used

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[14] James R. Kennedy, "Integrated Library Instruction," Library Journal, LXXXXV (April 15, 1970), 1450-3.

one or the other, but rarely use both resources. Earlham librarians also made certain that almost all students were successful in finding the material or the answer being sought. Students were not simply directed to possible sources with no additional assistance. If the librarians had not assisted throughout the entire search, they returned to check the students' progress. The Uris staff followed this procedure to some extent, but the reference librarians at Michigan did not do so in most instances.

Of the 241 reference questions asked by Earlham undergraduates in the two periods, librarians spent more than five minutes with 37 of the questions. For many of these questions, they assisted students for 15-20 minutes. Four search questions were also undertaken for students and two for faculty.

Another difference was noted at Earlham. Librarians approached students in the reference area or at the catalog, not waiting for students to gather courage to ask for help. 34 of the 241 reference questions were initiated by Earlham staff in contrast to only two such instances of 230 questions at Uris Library and four of 961 questions at Michigan's Undergraduate Library. The fact that Earlham librarians know many students naturally contributes to the success of this approach.

Table 10. - Questions Asked by Undergraduates at Reference Desk, Lilly Library, Earlham College

Types of Questions	October 13-17, 1969		November 17-21, 1969	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Information	18	13.4	34	20.8
Reference:				
R-1	68	50.8	75	46.1
R-2	--	----	--	----
R-3	4	2.9	11	6.7
R-4	25	18.7	32	19.6
R-5	9	6.7	2	1.2
R-6	6	4.5	8	4.9
R-7	1	0.7	--	----
Sub-total	113	84.3	128	78.5
Search	3	2.2	1	0.6
Problem	--	----	--	----
Total	134	99.9	163	99.9

Conclusion and Summary

The basic conclusion to be drawn from these studies is that we have not taken advantage of the opportunities presented by undergraduate libraries. Michigan and Cornell have not closed the "gap between class instruction and library service." Reference services are of low calibre. Too often the assistance given students is superficial and too brief. Although the reference services have been in a state of decline for several years, there have been almost no attempts to discover why or to make changes from traditional practices.

Some of the reasons for this situation are:

1) Librarians have a passive, rather than an activist, attitude. They wait for students who know little about libraries to request service. One undergraduate library has officially stated that "it is our responsibility to acquaint

students with the library and to offer assistance in its use; it is the student's responsibility to evaluate his library competence and determine the kind of help he will seek. Help is given him according to his expressed need...."

2) Librarians in undergraduate libraries rarely know any students.

3) There is a total lack of communication between librarians and faculty concerning reference services for their students.

4) The undergraduate libraries offer very limited and unimaginative instruction programs. Relatively little time, talent, and funds have been spent on orientation for freshmen. When there is some kind of freshmen orientation, advanced students and disadvantaged students are usually ignored. Few attempts have been made to integrate library instruction with course work.

5) We in universities have used the large number of students as an excuse for our failure to provide good reference services and library instruction programs.

6) No matter how much we claim to be a profession and a part of the teaching mission of the university, too many of us settle into clerical work which requires little thought.

Continuing to probe staff attitudes for an affect upon reference services, other questions come to mind. They are asked here to show the complexity and subtlety of the situation; definite answers will not be given. Do we expect few requests for assistance from undergraduates, and with this low expectation, unconsciously help keep the requests few in number? Are questions asked by undergraduates so strongly assumed to be easy, unchallenging, and repetitive that this attitude is conveyed to students who oblige by keeping them easy and unchallenging? Do we answer only the tentative and very broad first question asked

by a student and then dismiss him without detecting his real need? Do we have preconceived notions of how a question should be asked? And when the student fails to frame the question in this "proper" form, is our answer brief and superficial instead of tentative and probing? Do we in undergraduate libraries consider ourselves to be at the lowest level of reference work in a university library system - serving only third class citizens while reference librarians in the main library and in subject libraries serve the first class (faculty) and second class (graduate students) citizens?

Perhaps the saga of reference services in undergraduate libraries can be summarized by tracing the use of three prepositions - "to," "for," and "with" - in the literature of librarianship and in the minds of librarians. In the 1950's, university librarians held symposia entitled "Library Service to Undergraduates"[15] and "Library Service to Undergraduate College Students."[16] In discussing reference services, it was always reference services to undergraduate students. In the 1960's, articles began to appear with such titles as "Library Service for Undergraduates."[17] For undergraduates is a vast improvement over to undergraduates. It is not too much to read into these simple prepositions a change in attitude from paternalism to service. We must, however, go one preposition further in the 1970's. It must be students with librarians. If we do not get in touch with students and truly work with them - learning from them and having them learn from us - the last article published on undergraduate libraries will be entitled "Libraries without Students."

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[15]"Library Service to Undergraduates: A Symposium," College and Research Libraries, XIV (July, 1953), 266-75.

[16]"Library Service to Undergraduate College Students," College and Research Libraries, XVII (March, 1956), 143-55.

[17]M.W. Moss, "Library Service for Undergraduates," in The Provision and Use of Library and Documentation Services, ed. W. L. Saunders ("International Series of Monographs in Library and Information Science," Vol. 4; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1966), 85-113.